

Message Text

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E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PN, PFOR

SUBJECT: REMOVAL OF FOREIGN MINISTER TACK

REF: PANAMA 3633; PANAMA 3664

SUMMARY: ALTHOUGH THE PRESS HAS ATTRIBUTED EX-FOREIGN MINISTER TACK'S DEMOTION AS NECESSARY TO ENABLE HIM TO DEVOTE FULL TIME TO THE TREATY NEGOTIATIONS AND THEREBY ACCELERATE THEM, PANAMANIAN'S REGARD THE MOVE FOR WHAT IT IS-A DEMOTION. TORRIJOS REPORTEDLY HAD LOST

PATIENCE WITH TACK'S NEGATIVISM AND "RESIGNATION SCENES," BUT FELT THAT TACK'S IMPECCABLE NATIONALIST REPUTATION AND TIES WITH THE STUDENT SECTOR MADE IT IMPERATIVE THAT TACK REMAIN ASSOCIATED WITH THE TREATY NEGOTIATIONS. ACCORDING TO A GOP SOURCE, THE TREATY NEGOTIATIONS WILL GO ON JUST AS THEY HAVE IN THE PAST. END SUMMARY.

1. PANAMA CITY NEWSPAPERS HAVE EXPLAINED TORRIJOS' ACTION RELIEVING FOREIGN MINISTER TACK OF "ADMINISTRATIVE" DUTIES AS ENABLING HIM TO DEVOTE FULL TIME TO CANAL TREATY NEGOTIATIONS.

"MATUTINO" EDITORIAL JUNE 20 TITLED "CONSOLIDATION OF NEGOTIATOR FRONT" SAID NEGOTIATIONS ARE IN "THEIR MOST SENSITIVE PHASE" AND THEREFORE REQUIRE THE "MOST CONCENTRATED

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AND DELICATE DEDICATION." THE EDITORIAL CONTINUED THAT THE

CHANGE SHOULD ACCELERATE THE VELOCITY OF THE NEGOTIATIONS. THE EDITORIAL, HOWEVER, HARDLY MENTIONED TACK, CONCENTRATING INSTEAD ON THE NEGOTIATING PROCESS AND THE REVOLUTION'S GOALS.

2. THE ABSENCE OF PRAISE FOR TACK IN THE PUBLIC COMMENTARY TO DATE SCARCELY PERMITS TACK TO SAVE HIS FACE. RUMORS OF HIS IMMINENT SACKING HAD BEEN CIRCULATING THROUGH PANAMANIAN SOCIETY. BUSINESSMEN AT SOCIAL EVENT ATTENDED BY DCM LAST NIGHT EXPRESSED JUBILATION AT NEWS OF THE CHANGE. GOP OFFICIAL WITH CLOSE TIES TO TOP LEADERSHIP HAS TOLD EMBOFF THAT TACK'S PRIVATED PESSIMISM AND NEGATIVISM CONCERNING THE TREATY NEGOTIATIONS--WHICH SOMETIMES GOT PUBLIC EXPOSURE SUCH AS IN HIS MAY 23 MEETING WITH LAW STUDENTS--AND HIS PERIODIC "RESIGNATION SCENES" HAD STRETCHED TORRIJOS' PATIENCE PAST THE BREAKING POINT. TORRIJOS MUST KEEP HIM IDENTIFIED WITH THE TREATY NEGOTIATIONS, BUT ACCORDING TO THE SOURCE, TACK WILL NEVER RETURN TO HIS JOB AS FOREIGN MINISTER. THE NEGOTIATIONS, HOWEVER, WOULD BE CONDUCTED THROUGH "THE SAME CHANNELS AS BEFORE."

3. COMMENT: WHILE TACK'S INFLUENCE UNDOUBTEDLY HAS BEEN CUT BACK BY TORRIJOS' ACTION, IT WOULD BE PREMATURE TO COUNT HIM OUT. HIS EXPERIENCE AND LARGELY SUCCESSFUL RECORD OF CONDUCTING PANAMA'S FOREIGN POLICY AND HIS IMPECCABLE NATIONALIST CREDENTIALS HAVE MADE IT DIFFICULT FOR TORRIJOS TO SHUNT HIM ASIDE. MOREOVER, HE HAS COURTED THE STUDENTS--ABOUT WHOS OPPOSITION TORRIJOS IS NERVOUS--AND THE ULTRA-NATIONALISTS AND COULD, IF SO INCLINED, SURREPTITIOUSLY INSPIRE OPPOSITION TOWARD TORRIJOS AND A NEW TREATY.

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